

Of thyng of which they nevere agilte hir lyve.
Of wenches wolde I beren hym on honde,
Whan that for syk unnetthes myghte he stonde;
Yet tikled it his herte, for that he
Wende that I hadde of hym so greet chiertee.
I swoor that al my walkyng out by nyghte
Was for respye wenches that he dighte.
Under that colour hadde I many a myrthe,
for al swich wit was yeven us in oure byrthe;
Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng, God hath yive
To wommen kyndely, whil they may lyve;
And thus of o thyng I avaunte me,
Atte ende I hadde the better in ech degree,
By sleighte, or force, or by som maner thyng,
As by continueel murmur or grucchyng.
Namely abedden hadden they meschaunce;
Ther wolde I chide and do hem no plesaunce;
I wolde no lenger in the bed abyde,
If that I felte his arm over my syde,
Til he had maad his raunsoun unto me;
Thanne wolde I suffre hym do his nyctee.
And therefore every man this tale I telle,
Wynne whoso may, for al is for to selle.
With empty hand men may none haukes lure;
for wyngnyng wolde I al his lust endure,
And make me a feyned appetit;
And yet in bacon hadde I nevere delit;
That made me that evere I wolde hem chide;
for thogh the pope hadde seten hem biside,
I wolde nat spare hem at hir owene bord,
for, by my trouthe, I quitte hem word for word.
As help me verray God omnipotent,
Thogh I right now sholde make my testament,
I ne owe hem nat a word that it nys quit.
I broghte it so aboute by my wit
That they moste yeve it up, as for the beste,
Or elles hadde we nevere been in reeste;
for thogh he looked as a wood leoun,
Yet sholde he faille of his conclusioun.
THANNE wolde I seye, Goode lief, taak keep,
How mekely looketh Wilkyn, oure sheep;
Com neer, my spouse, lat me ba thy cheke!
Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,
And han a sweete spiced conscience,
Sith ye so preche of Jobes patience.
Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan preche,
And, but ye do, certein we shal yow teche
That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.
Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees;
And sith a man is moore resonable
Than womman is, ye moste been suffrable.
What eyleth yow to grucche thus and grone?
Is it for ye wolde have my queynte allone?
Wy, taak it al! lo, have it every deel!
Peter! I shrewe yow but ye love it weel;
for if I wolde selle my bele chose,
I koude walke as fressh as is a rose;
But I wol kepe it for youre owene tooth.
Ye be to blame, by God! I sey yow sooth.
Swiche maner wordes hadde we on honde.

Wol I speken of my fourthe
housbonde.
My fourthe housbonde was a
revelour;
This is to seyn, he hadde a para-
mour;
And I was yong and ful of ragerye,
Stibourne and strong, and joly as a pye.
Wel koude I daunce to an harpe smale,
And synge, ywis, as any nyghtyngale,
Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweete wyn.
Metellius, the foule cherl, the swyn,
That with a staf birafte his wyf hire lyf,
for she drank wyn; thogh I hadde been his wyf
he sholde nat han daunted me fro drynke;
And after wyn, on Venus moste I thynke;
for al so siker as cold engendreth hayl,
A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tayl.
In wommen vinolent is no defence,
This knowen leechours by experience.
But, Lord Crist! whan that it remembreth me
Apon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,
It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote!
Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote
That I have had my world as in my tyme,
But age, alas! that al wole envynyme,
Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith;
Lat go, farewell, the devel go therwith!
The flour is goon, ther is namoore to telle,
The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle;
But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.
Wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde.
I seye, I hadde in herte greet despit
That he of any oother had delit;
But he was quit, by God and by Seint Jocel!
I made hym of the same wode a croce,
Nat of my body in no foul manere,
But certeinly, I made folk swich cheere,
That in his owene grece I made hym frye
for angre, and for verray jalousye.
By God, in erthe I was his purgatorie,
for which I hope his soule be in glorie!
for God it woot, he sat ful ofte and song
Whan that his shoo ful bitterly hym wrong.
Ther was no wight, save God and he, that wiste,
In many wise, how soore I hym twiste.
He deyde whan I cam fro Jerusalem,
And lith ygrave under the roode/beem;
Al is his tombe noght so curyus
As was the sepulchre of hym, Daryus,
Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly;
It nys but wast to burye hym preciously.
Lat hym fare wel, God yeve his soule reste,
He is now in his grave and in his cheste!
Wol of my fiftthe housbonde wol I telle.
God lete his soule nevere come in helle!
And yet was he to me the mooste shrewe;
That feele I on my ribbes al by rewe,
And evere shal, unto myn endyng day.
But in oure bed he was ful fressh and gay;
And therewithal so wel koude he me glose,
Whan that he wolde han my bele chose,
That thogh he hadde me bet on every bon,

he koude wyne agayn my love anon.
I trowe I loved hym beste for that he
Was of his love dangerous to me.
Alle wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,
In this matere a queynte fantasie;
Therafter wol we crie al day and crave.
Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we;
Dreese on us faste, and thanne wol we fle.
With daunger oute we al oure chaffare;
Greet pries at market maketh deere ware,
And to greet cheepe is holde at litel prys.
This knoweth every womman that is wys.
Wifthe housbonde, God his soule
blesse!
Which that I took for love, and no
richesse,
He som tyme was a clerk of Oxen-
ford,
And hadde left scole, and wente at hom to bord
With my gossib, dwellyng in oure toun;
God have hir soule! hir name was Alisoun.
She knew myn herte, and eek myn privetee,
Bet than oure parisshe/preest, as moot I thee.
To hire biwreyed I my conseil al;
for hadde myn housbonde pissed on a wal,
Or doon a thyng that sholde han cost his lyf,
To hire, and to another worthy wyf,
And to my nece, which that I loved weel,
I wolde han toold his conseil every deel.
And so I dide ful often, God it woot,
That made his face ful often rede and hoot
for verray shame, and blamed hymself for he
had toold to me so greet a pryvetee.
AND so bifel that ones, in a Lente,
So often tymes I to my gossyb wente,
for evere yet I loved to be gay,
And for to walke, in March, Aveniril and May,
fro hous to hous, to heere sondry talys,
That Jankyn clerk, and my gossyb, dame Alys,
And I myself, into the feeldes wente.
Myn housbonde was at London al that Lente;
I hadde the better leyser for to pleye,
And for to se, and eek for to be seye
Of lusty folk; what wiste I wher my grace
Was shapen for to be, or in what place?
Therefore I made my visitaciouns
To vigilies and to processions,
To prechyng eek, and to thise pilgrimages,
To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages,
And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes,
Thise wormes, ne thise motthes, ne thise mytes,
Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel;
And wostow why? for they were used weel.
Wol I tellen forth what happed me.
I seye that in the feeldes walked we
Till trewely we hadde swich daliance,
This clerk and I, that of my purveiance
I spak to hym, and seyde hym, how that he,
If I were wydwe, sholde wedde me;
for certeinly, I sey for no bobance,
Yet was I nevere withouten purveiance
Of mariage, nor othere thynges eek.

I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek
That hath but oon hole for to sterte to,
And if that faille, thanne is al ydo.
I bar hym on honde he hadde enchanted me,
My dame taughte me that soutiltee,
And eek I seyde, I mette of hym al nyght,
He wolde han slayn me as I lay upright,
And al my bed was ful of verray blood,
But yet I hope that he shal do me good;
for blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught;
And al was fals, I dremed of it right naught,
But as I folwed ay my dames loore,
As wel of this as othere thynges moore.
But now, sire, lat me se, what I shal seyn?
Al! ha! by God, I have my tale ageyn.
Whan that my fourthe housbonde was on beere
I weep algate, and made sory cheere,
As wyves mooten, for it is usage,
And with my coverchief covered my visage;
But, for that I was purveyed of a make,
I wepte but smal, and that I undertake.
O chirche was myn housbonde born amorwe,
With neighebores, that for hym maden sorwe;
And Jankyn, oure clerk, was oon of tho.
As help me God, whan that I saugh hym go
After the beere, me thoughte he hadde a paire
Of legges and of feet so clene and faire,
That al myn herte I yaf unto his boold.
He was, I trowe, a twenty wynter oold,
And I was forty, if I shal seye sooth;
But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth.
Gat/tothed I was, and that bicam me weel,
I hadde the prente of seint Venus seel.
As help me God, I was a lusty oon,
And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel bigon;
And trewely, as myne housbondes tolde me,
I hadde the beste quoniam myghte be;
for certes, I am al Vencrien
In feelynge, and myn herte is Marcien.
Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse.
Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars therinne.
Allas! alas! that evere love was synne!
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun
By vertu of my constellacioun,
That made me I koude noght withdrawe
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
Yet have I Martes mark upon my face,
And also in another, privee, place,
for, God so wys be my savacioun,
I ne loved nevere by no discrecioun,
But evere folwede myn appetit,
Al were he short, or long, or blak, or whit;
I took no kepe, so that he liked me,
How poore he was, ne eek of what degree.
WHAT sholde I seye, but at the monthes
ende
This joly clerk, Jankyn, that was so hende,
Hath wedded me with greet solempnytee,
And to hym yaf I all the lond and fee,
That evere was me yeven therbifoore;
But afterward repented me ful soore.
He nolde suffre nothyng of my list.